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AN

ADDRESS

TO

THE PHILERMENIAN SOCIETY

OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,

ON

THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE LITERATURE OF

THE LAST AND PRESENT CENTURY.

—

DELIVERED AT PROVIDENCE, R. I., SEPT. 4, 1837.

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BY ALEXANDER H. EVERETT.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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PROVIDENCE:
PRINTED BY KNOWLES, VOSE & CO.
1837.

A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN OF THE SOCIETY—

Though personally a stranger to most of you, it is with much satisfaction that I meet you upon an occasion so agreeable as that which has now called us together. On the Anniversary of the venerable Institution, where you received your first initiation into the mysteries of science, you return from your various occupations in the walks of active life, to renew your old associations with each other, and to revive your interest in the pursuits which constituted at once your duties and delights during your abode in this University. You withdraw for a time from the employments and professions—the religious and political connexions in which you may have become engaged,—from the different social circles to which you respectively belong,—and meet upon the common ground of early friendship and a mutual attachment to the cause of education and letters.

Such a purpose, gentlemen, carries with it its own justification and even eulogy. It is good for us to be here. It is good for us to quit for a time the absorbing cares, the bitter controversies, the alternate triumphs and defeats, that attend our progress through the world, and dwell together, for a day or two at least, on the holy and beautiful heights of Learning, in an atmosphere of harmony and love. The intellectual powers are invigorated by a temporary relaxation from habitual labor ;—

the heart is made better by indulgence in the kind sentiments, which are awakened by the occasion ;—the very physical senses are refreshed, by breathing again the gales that soothed our careless infancy, and feasting our eyes upon the well rembered woods, and hills, and waters over which they blew. Who has not experienced in his own person the deep truth, as well as the exquisite poetical charm of the well known words, in which the Poet of Eton College expressed his feelings on a distant prospect of that Institution ?

Ah happy hills ! Ah pleasing shade !
 Ah fields, beloved in vain,
 Where once my careless childhood strayed,
 A stranger yet to pain !
 I feel the gales that from you blow
 A momentary bliss bestow,
 As, waving fresh their gladsome wing,
 My weary soul they seem to soothe,
 And redolent of joy and youth,
 To breathe a second spring.

I should consider myself, gentlemen, as doing injustice to such an occasion, if I were to select a topic for the present address, which should tend, in the least degree, to awaken differences of sentiment, inconsistent with the object for which we are assembled. Avoiding every theme, which offers any danger of this description, I venture to solicit your indulgence for a few remarks upon the *Moral Characteristics and Tendencies of the Literature of the present, as compared with that of the last century*. The aspect of learning at these two periods, considered under a moral point of view, presents some differences, resulting from corresponding differences in the state of society, which are curious in themselves, and pregnant with lessons of high practical importance. In treating this subject, I shall first sketch very rapidly the nature of the differences to which I allude, and shall afterwards attempt to illustrate them by remarks on such of the principal writers of the two periods, as indicate most

distinctly their respective moral aspects. The nature of the subject will lead me to dwell more particularly upon the literature of the Continent, and especially of France ; which, during a considerable portion of the time in question, gave its moral tone to that of all the rest of Europe.

The outline of the difference in the moral characteristics of the literature of the last and present century, is doubtless familiar to you, and may be stated in a few words. It corresponds with the remarkable change in public opinion and in the state of society throughout christendom, which occurred during this period, and of which the French Revolution formed the turning point. The effort of the public mind throughout Europe, before the Revolution, as exhibited in literature, not less than its other more active demonstrations, was directed to the reform of existing institutions, political and religious. The spirit of learning at this period was bold, critical, inquisitive. In its excesses it degenerated into skepticism upon the clearest and most important truths, and mockery of all that is justly held most dear and venerable by the wise and good. The opinion of which this form of learning was the expression, wrought out its practical result in the French Revolution. That memorable political tornado, which in most parts of Europe, swept away with the abuses to be remedied the institutions themselves in which they were found, left society a vast, unoccupied field, overspread with ruins and reeking with the blood, which had been poured out, like water, in the course of these convulsions. A change now came over the spirit of the age and of literature. Reform, whether for evil or for good, had done its work, and done it thoroughly. The object was now to re-construct, if possible, from the fragments of the fallen edifices, or to create from new materials furnished by the plastic energies of the great minds which guide the movements of the rest, new systems of doctrine and new forms of religion and government. This change

in the direction of public opinion, and in the nature of the objects which it principally aimed to bring about, was soon reflected in the aspect of learning. In the more substantial departments of theoretical and practical Philosophy, profound thought and original creative energy took the place of criticism. In the lighter forms of Poetry and Romance, seriousness and tenderness predominated over sarcasm. The prevailing errors were now those of extravagance and superstition, rather than of skepticism. In short, gentlemen, the characteristics of learning during these two periods, as seen alike, in its power and its weakness, its truth and its errors, its beauty and its deformity, corresponded exactly with the nature of the spirit, which prevailed in each, and with the direction of public opinion, which tended during the former to the *Reformation*, and during the latter to the *Reconstruction*, or as it has sometimes been called, the *Regeneration* of society.

Such, gentlemen, is, in general, the outline of the difference in the state of public opinion and of learning, at the two periods in question, to which I have alluded. You will not, of course, understand me to intimate that the spirit which prevailed in either, was universal and without exception. While the great majority of minds follow, through all its changes, the current of the age in which they live, a few eccentric spirits strike out an independent path for themselves, sometimes directly opposite to that of their contemporaries. Thus we find, in the midst of the wild licentiousness of the literary carnival of the last century, a strain of the deepest melancholy issuing from the lyre of Young, and answered from the Continent in corresponding tones, in the high religious enthusiasm of the *Messiah*. Nor was the practical direction of public opinion at either of these periods entirely uniform throughout christendom. While the rest of Europe was struggling with frenzied energy for improvement, Italy and Spain slept almost as profoundly as Egypt,

Palestine and Greece. England, from causes peculiar to herself, though the freest and best informed nation in Europe, resisted, rather than shared the all-pervading impulse, especially when it took the shape of open Revolution. Now, on the contrary, when the storm has spent its fury on the Continent, and public opinion has taken the opposite direction, the spirit of Reform has broken out with fresh vigor in England. Hence the different aspects of the literature of the last and present century, to which I have alluded, are less observable in England than they are upon the Continent; as I have already intimated, and shall have occasion to shew, more fully in the sequel.

It is curious, however,—after making all proper allowance for individual exceptions,—to see how completely the spirit of Reform had obtained possession of the whole mind of Europe, at the period preceeding the French Revolution, even in quarters where it was likely to exercise the most injurious influence. Let us glance for a moment at the political and literary aspect of the age of LOUIS XV. It offers one of the most brilliant pictures that has ever been exhibited in the history of civilization.

Politically viewed, the strength is in the East. England, distracted by the struggles of the STUART and BRUNSWICK families for the succession to the throne, is hardly a first-rate power. France has sunk already from the height of influence, which she had reached under LOUIS XIV. into a state of comparative inferiority. Spain and Italy languish in torpid inactivity under the same leaden BOURBON sceptre. In the mean time Prussia, inspired by the commanding genius of FREDERIC the Great, starts at once from the condition of a third or fourth rate power, to be the temporary arbiter of Europe. Russia, created by the energy of PETER, is nobly sustained and even strengthened by that of CATHERINE; while in Austria, MARIA THERESA, less dististinguished by talent, adorns with tranquil dignity and the amiable virtues of private life, the purple of the Holy Roman Empire.

Such are the political relations. But France, though politically fallen, reigns without a rival in the world of civilization and letters. The sun of learning has set in Italy and Spain, and has not yet risen in Germany. England, at the return of CHARLES II., had sacrificed her own vigorous and manly school in a vain imitation of that of France. "Glorious JOHN,"—glorious chiefly for what he might have done, and POPE, unequal successors to the literary sceptre of SHAKSPEARE and MILTON, have found themselves no successors at all. France, meanwhile, has diffused the taste for her literature from Cadiz to Archangel. Her language is spoken at all the Courts, and forms the common medium of intercourse among the cultivated classes of all the different nations. Her writers, though greatly fallen, at least as we now consider them, from the standard of the age of LOUIS XIV., are regarded as the models of taste, and the only ones entitled to attention. The appearance of their works is watched as a matter of public concern throughout Europe. Some of the German princes maintain ambassadors at Paris, expressly for the purpose of receiving a regular account of the new publications. Such was the mission of the Baron de GRIMM, whose despatches, which have since been published, form perhaps the most amusing literary memoirs in existence. At no time, before or since, with the exception of a brilliant period in the history of ancient Greece, was learning so highly honored in the persons of its professors. PLATO had been invited to reside at the Court of DIONYSIUS, King of Sicily. In the same way, the mighty minds that swayed the destinies of Europe, from the thrones of Russia and Prussia, courted the society of the literary men of France. FREDERIC the Great, invited VOLTARE to Berlin, and corresponded with him for many years. CATHERINE sought unsuccessfully the honor of his company, but enjoyed that of his correspondence, and, after his death, purchased his library, which is still preserved in the Pal-

ace of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. D'ALEMBERT declined a similar invitation from the Northern Seminaries, which, however, was accepted by MARMONTEL, DIDEROT, and others, who, with the Ambassador SEGUR, himself a distinguished man of letters, constituted St. Petersburg almost a French Court. So completely had the Great FREDERIC given up his mind to the witchery of French literature, that, although the noble German language was native to his tongue, he would not condescend to use it, but habitually conversed with his friends and wrote his own books in French; and this, too, at a time when KLOPSTOCK was in all his glory, and when the brilliant constellation of Weimar had already shown itself above the horizon.

Such, gentlemen, was the influence, which was exercised throughout Europe, at the period alluded to, by the literature of France. It realised, in the world of letters, the universal empire which the Sovereigns of France have, at various times, attempted in vain to acquire by arms. The sceptre of this universal empire, appertained by general consent to the celebrated VOLTAIRE. There may have been among the French writers of that day, individuals who may justly be considered as superior to VOLTAIRE in some of the requisites for literary excellence. MONTESQUIEU, for example, is decidedly above him in originality, depth and precision of thought, while in elegance of style and vigor of imagination, he is at least his equal. But neither the author of the Spirit of Laws and the Persian Letters, nor any other writer of the period, could dispute with the Patriarch of Ferney, the palm of authority in the world of letters. He owed this to a union of various qualities and talents, extraordinary in themselves and still more extraordinary in their combination. As a wit and poet, "if not first, in the very first line;"—a clear and powerful thinker, though not attaining the highest point either of originality or correctness, per-

haps because in all his speculations, he seems to have aimed at effect rather than truth ;—he combined with these substantial endowments, an almost miraculous facility of pouring out his thoughts alike in prose and verse,—an indefatigable and restless activity, not always companion of high literary powers ;—and a dauntless courage that spurned control and rose convulsively against all sorts of oppression. These qualities, exercised through a long career of more than half a century,—seconded too in their operation by the general tendency of public opinion, may well account for his colossal reputation, and the immense influence, literary and political, which he possessed over his contemporaries.

Connected by birth with the middling class of society,—at that time separated from the highest, especially in France, by a broad and almost impassable line of distinction,—VOLTAIRE raised himself at once, by a precocious display of talent, to an association on equal terms with nobles and princes ; and so little were his powers hampered by any supposed inferiority to his new companions, that one of his earliest adventures was a personal affair, in which he undertook to secure his honor against the effect of an insult from a Prince of the blood Royal. The result was an imprisonment of several months in the Bastille ; but so far was VOLTAIRE from being intimidated or depressed by this punishment, that he employed the period of his confinement in writing the *Henriade* ; a work which sustains, of course, no comparison with the *Iliad*, but holds a high rank among the so-called *epic* poems of modern times. Soon after his liberation, he travelled in England, and he seems to have imbibed or fostered in that country the bold, free thinking spirit, that afterwards predominated so strongly in his writings. His *Letters on England*, written at this period, exhibit one of the first examples of that fearless discussion of moral and political questions, which, however at times abused

and carried to excess,—constitutes, undoubtedly, one of the most honorable distinctions of modern civilization. On his return from England, he essayed his power in dramatic poetry, where he at once took the lead of all his competitors. His *Orestes*, *Merope*, *Alzire* and *Zaire*,—if they do not fully equal the master-pieces of Corneille and Racine,—stand upon the same line, and command at this day, the unqualified admiration of the lovers of French tragedy. The poet infused into some of these plays, what perhaps was no improvement of them, poetically viewed, the new element of philosophical thought, and endeavored to render them auxiliary to his great purpose of Reform. His next efforts, though he continued through life to exercise himself in tragedy, were in History. Here he struck out a new path ; and abandoning the grave, didactic character of the ancient historians, and of the great writers of modern Italy, he made his work a keen, sarcastic commentary on the political and religious abuses of the times which he describes. In none of his productions are his powers displayed in a more truly characteristic shape, and in none, perhaps, does he appear to greater advantage, than in the best of these histories, which are the *Age of Louis XIV.* and the *Universal History of Modern Europe*. In these he exhibits something like the freshness and power of an original inventor, and, if less profound and instructive than some other historians, is, perhaps, the most entertaining of them all. In connexion with these great works, he poured forth a flood of minor productions in prose and verse, sufficient of themselves, to have given the highest reputation to any writer ; although many of them, as well as some of his histories, are objectionable on the score of their moral tendency,—some of them to such a degree as to be wholly unfit for general perusal.

For a long time after his return to England, VOLTAIRE was a favorite at the French Court, where he held for

twenty years the honorary title of Chamberlain, which gave him a free admission to the personal society of the Royal Family. But the freedom of his strictures on political and religious abuses, finally alienated from him the favor of the government, and occasioned his exile from France. This, however, was to him, with his European reputation, a very small matter. Proscribed in France, he was invited to Prussia by the Great FREDERIC, who gave him the title of Chamberlain, and an apartment in the Palace. The atmosphere of Courts has been sometimes found dangerous to the personal independence of men of genius; but VOLTAIRE was not likely to suffer in this way from its influence. The monarch of Letters sustained himself on a footing of perfect equality with the monarch of Prussia, and finally retired in disgust from his dominions, rather than submit to some real or supposed affront. He now established the head quarters of his universal literary sovereignty at Ferney, in the little republic of Geneva, where he held his court, for the greater part of his remaining life, receiving the homage of admiring crowds of visitors from all parts of Europe. His fortune was ample, the fruit, as it seems, of his own economy, talent and industry; his enjoyment of life, though somewhat impaired by perpetual attacks from rivals and adversaries, was probably on the whole very great;—his conversation with his numerous visitors, brilliant, various and captivating almost beyond example. At the close of his long career, when he was fast approaching the verge of fourscore,—after the accession of LOUIS XVI., the hostility of the French Court relented, and he was permitted to return to Paris. His reception there was a splendid popular triumph. The worlds of fashion and letters,—which were identical, for letters were then all the fashion at Paris,—crowded round him as an oracle. Finally, he attended the theatre,—through life the scene of his most brilliant successes,—at the representation of one of his own tragedies, and after

it was over, saw his bust crowned with laurels amid the acclamations of the audience. The excitement of this scene seems to have been too great for his now feeble frame, and to have overpowered the principle of life. He was taken ill the next day, and after a confinement of two or three weeks, expired on the field of his early glory,—surrounded by friends, crowned with wealth and honor, and, as it were, in the arms of victory.

Such, gentlemen, were the character and literary career of this celebrated person, who embodied in his own works so much of the literature of the earlier part of the last century, and so completely personified the spirit of the whole in its brilliant qualities, and to a certain extent, in its errors and excesses. He was, as was well said of him during his life time, the spoiled child of an age which he did more than any other person to spoil:—*l'enfant gâté du siècle qu'il gâta*. The reckless, innovating spirit of the period, formed and developed his character, while the incredible fertility of resources, which he exhibited through his long career, did much to strengthen the already overwhelming opinion. His object and desire through life were the reform of abuses in religion and government. For this there was ample room : and had his efforts been kept within the line of good taste, good morals and sound discretion, their result might have been wholly beneficial. Unfortunately, he too often overlooked all these considerations, and others of a still more solemn and imperious character, in his zeal for effect ; and has left behind him a mass of writings, of which a very large portion can hardly be perused with profit or even safety.

But the errors and excesses of VOLTAIRE, reprehensible as they certainly are, are in some degree moral, compared with those of his contemporaries, and immediate successors, composing what has sometimes been called the *Philosophical*, but more properly the *Materialist* or *Atheistical* school. The professors of this doctrine were not

unwilling to sustain that system by the authority of the high reputation of VOLTAIRE, and sometimes claimed him as the Patriarch of the Philosophical church. In reality, however, they had entirely abandoned his opinions on the most important questions of philosophy, and substituted for them others of a directly opposite character. VOLTAIRE, though he often sneered and scoffed at what he considered as religious errors and abuses, never lost sight of the great truths of Religion itself, but continued to support and defend them against all opposition, up to the close of his life. The philosophers, on the other hand, laughed at the idea of an intelligent Supreme Being, denied the reality of moral distinctions, and a future existence, and considered man as a variety of the animal creation, somewhat superior in intellectual power, but essentially similar in all respects to the brutes that surround him, and destined, like them, after the close of his brief existence in this world, to complete annihilation. The difference between their opinions and those of VOLTAIRE, upon these great questions, is illustrated by an anecdote, recorded in the memoirs of GRIMM, whom, as I just now remarked, was, at this period, the literary ambassador of the Duke of SAXE GOTHA, at Paris.

“The Patriarch,” says GRIMM, “was sitting one fine summer evening in his garden, at Ferney, conversing with some of his friends, upon the brilliancy and beauty of the starry firmament above their heads, when he extemporised the following verses :”

Tous ces vastes pays d'azur et de lumière,
Tirés du sein du vide, et formés sans matière,
Arrondis sans compas, et tournant sans pivot,
Ont à peine coûté la dépense d' un mot.

The purport of these lines, gentlemen, as I need not inform those of you, who are acquainted with the French language, is the same, in a more concentrated form, with that of the beautiful hymn of Addison,—“The spacious

firmament on high,"—which is too familiar to you all, to require to be repeated.

"The Patriarch," says GRIMM, in relating this anecdote, "still adheres to his old fancy of a Supreme Intelligence, and a future state of rewards and punishments. He reasons upon this subject like a school boy, a bright and lively one, to be sure, as he is, but still a mere school boy. I should like to ask him whether any one has ever seen this supreme intelligence,—how tall he is, and what is the color of his complexion. The Patriarch pretends that we cannot conceive of the existence of a Universe, without a supreme creating mind. This is true enough: we cannot conceive of such a thing, but we know the fact that it exists, and that is, perhaps, quite as good."

Such, gentlemen, was the doctrine of the philosophical school; such the *argument*, if argument it can be called, by which it was supported. Although the head quarters of the sect were established at Paris, the leader resided in a different part of Europe, being no less a person than the celebrated DAVID HUME, of Edinburgh; one of the ablest and at the same time most dangerous philosophical writers of modern times. The correctness and simple elegance of his style of writing, which make it, though not very nervous or brilliant, one of the best in the language; the clearness of his reasoning in many of his essays, particularly on subjects in political economy, and his success as a historian, together with his respectable position in society, and amiable personal character, gave him great authority in the world of letters. This he unfortunately employed in lending credit and reputation, to a series of the most revolting paradoxes, in metaphysical and moral philosophy, resulting in the rejection of all religion, natural and revealed, the denial of moral distinctions, and a doubt as to the existence of any thing whatever, mind or matter.—HUME himself candidly confesses, in one of his published works, that in his cooler and more practical moments, he

had no real faith in these strange heresies, which he supports in his writings, with so much gravity and apparent conviction. "When I sit down," he says, "of an evening to play a game of back-gammon, or join in a pleasant conversation with a circle of intelligent friends, and withdraw my attention in this way for a few hours, from my favorite studies, I lose the conviction that I ordinarily feel in the truth of their results, and begin to look upon them as the mere vagaries of fancy. This candid avowal by HUME of his own feelings, corresponds with that of the mad astronomer, in JOHNSON'S *Rasselas*, who believed himself to possess a control over the elements, but was at any time restored to his senses, by an hour's conversation with the beautiful favorite of the Princess. HUME'S faith in his own paradoxes, so far as there was any reality in it—was, in fact, an example of that sort of *monomania*, by which a person, from intently meditating for a long time upon a train of ideas, which he originally knew to be false, acquires at length a sort of persuasion that they are true.

The doctrine of HUME obtained but little currency in England, where life is too intensely practical to afford much scope for the success of theories, which are refuted at once by an appeal to practical experience. In France, on the contrary, it fell in with the current of public opinion, and formed, in connexion with other speculations of a kindred character, the basis of the philosophy, to which I just now alluded. CONDILLAC had falsely deduced from the writings of LOCKE, the conclusions, never drawn by himself, that sensation was the only source of knowledge, and that there was no reality in any thing not immediately palpable to the senses. HELVETIUS denied that there was any essential distinction between moral good and evil, and acknowledged no other rational motive of action but sensual pleasure. DIDEROT and others, attacked religion under all its forms, and undertook to establish, on

its ruins, a system of naked, unsophisticated atheism. It was their intention to embody these cheering views in a large work, designed for a sort of code of universal science, to be called the *Encyclopedia*. This plan was in part carried into effect, and in part disappointed. The work was published, and forms a conspicuous and voluminous portion of most large libraries ; but it was in a great measure robbed of its sting, by the caution of the bookseller who published it. This person, who seems to have been a wiser man than his employers, justly deeming that the insertion of their favorite theories would render the work exceedingly obnoxious to the government, and probably occasion its prohibition, took the precaution to suppress, without consulting the authors, a large proportion of their philosophical speculations. When the work was nearly through the press, and it was too late to remedy the mischief, the authors discovered, with dismay, the deception that had been practised upon them. They express their indignation at this act of petty treason in their prudent, but, it must be owned, not to them entirely faithful publisher, with a violence which, now that their labors are more correctly estimated than they were at the time by themselves, appears rather comic. The work is, in fact, of little or no value. Its theories in the physical sciences and their application to the arts, have been almost wholly superseded by the immense progress, since made in these departments. Its moral philosophy was immediately refuted by the excesses of the French Revolution, and is now rejected with contempt, by the almost universal consent of christendom. In short, gentlemen, the great French Encyclopedia, which was intended by its authors as an Abridgment of all science at its highest possible state of perfection, an infallible standard of opinion and belief for all future ages, had come, within fifty years after its publication, to be looked upon as little better than a part of the necessary lumber of a large library,

rarely if ever consulted for the purpose of instruction, and chiefly curious as one of the most remarkable examples in literary history, of an entire disproportion between the grandeur of the effort and the littleness of the performance.

In the meantime, however, the authors of the Encyclopedia were industriously, and much more successfully employed in disseminating the same doctrines in other forms. Under the influence of the temporary public favor, with which they were received, these writers appear to have lost sight entirely of the real character of their opinions, and constantly state them with a simplicity which renders them almost ludicrous. GRIMM, as I have remarked, writes to the Duke of SAXE-GOTHA, a reigning Prince, that he should be glad to know the stature and complexion of the Supreme Being. D'ALEMBERT, undoubtedly the most judicious person of the sect, writes, in his turn, to the King of PRUSSIA, the most powerful and intelligent Sovereign in Europe, that he is harassed to death by his doubts upon what he calls the *terrible question*, whether there is any thing at all in existence. Finally, HELVETIUS carries his reform of moral science so far, as to affirm that the relation, naturally existing between parents and children, is that of *hatred*. "Hence arises," says he, after some paltry sophistry, which he considers as tending to this conclusion, "hence arises the *hatred* which naturally exists between parents and children." It is melancholy to reflect, that these revolting notions were, at the time, generally received with favor in the highest circles on the Continent of Europe. Their authors, as we have seen, were in habits of personal intimacy and correspondence with the most illustrious monarchs, who were proud and happy to treat them as equals. The wealthy and titled classes practised, in daily life, the lessons which were taught in this school. In short, the very substance of society, in its most exalted portions,

under an external varnish of refinement and elegance, had become entirely corrupt, and sunk into a state of moral dissolution.

This, gentlemen, was the real cause of the excesses of the French Revolution ; which the enemies of liberty are in the habit of representing as the natural results of attempts to reform political abuses, and establish liberal institutions. A reform of government, undertaken by upright and honorable men, from just views of its necessity, may be conducted to a close, with very little danger of abuse or excess, as is amply shewn by the history of our own Revolution, and that which is now in progress in England. It was the misfortune of the cause of liberty in France, that the conduct of the Reform fell into the hands of men imbued with the most erroneous notions of moral duty, and incapable, by character, of doing justice to the circumstances in which they were placed. It was not till one whole generation had been swept from the stage by the tremendous inflictions which their own errors, faults, and crimes, had brought upon them ; and another, formed in the stern school of suffering, to a purer and loftier standard of character, had taken their places, that the principle of liberty began to work out its proper effects, and open upon the longing eyes of the gallant French nation, the fair prospect which now seems to unfold itself before them, of a long period of political prosperity, under a just, wise, and liberal government.

I shall have occasion, gentlemen, to touch again upon this topic, at the conclusion of the address. It is, of course, unnecessary to say any thing in refutation of the doctrines to which I have alluded, before an audience like that which I have now the honor to address. The brilliant minstrel of the Pleasures of Hope, has expressed what we all feel upon the subject, in one of the most powerful passages of that poem.

Are these the pompous tidings ye proclaim,
 Lights of the world and demigods of Fame?
 Is this your triumph,—this your proud applause,
 Children of Truth, and champions of her cause?
 Oh star-eyed Science! hast thou wandered there
 To waft us home the message of Despair?
 Then bind the palm, thy Sage's brow to suit,
 With blasted leaf and death-distilling fruit!
 Ah me! the laureate wreath that murder rears,
 Blood-nursed and watered by the widow's tears,
 Seems not so foul, so tainted or so dread,
 As waves the night shade o'er the skeptic head.
 What is the bigot's torch, the tyrant's chain?
 I smile on death, if heaven-ward hope remain;
 But if the warring winds of nature's strife
 Be all the faithless charter of my life;
 If chance awaked, inexorable power,
 This frail and feverish being of an hour;
 Then melt, ye elements! that formed in vain
 This troubled pulse and visionary brain:
 Fade, ye wild flowers; memorials of my doom!
 And sink, ye stars! that light me to the tomb!

Such, gentlemen, was the spirit which prevailed in the philosophy and literature of the last century. The true method of escaping from its influence, was by a direct appeal to the instructive good sense, and good feeling of the people. This appeal was made at once in various forms, and in all parts of Europe, with a decision and success, that reflect the highest honor upon the intellectual and moral character of christendom. A new philosophy and a new literature, animated by a spirit precisely the reverse of that which prevailed in the materialist school, coinciding in all their developements with the loftiest views of the nature and destiny of man, and the noblest and best feelings of the uncorrupted heart, started at once into being, and have ever since been gaining public favor, until they may be said to have determined the moral tendency of the learning of the present age.

The new Philosophy to which I allude, grew up, at about the the same time in two different and remote

points of Europe, out of the reflections of independent thinkers, reasoning, without connexion or communication with each other, upon the same subjects, and led by the mere force of truth, to the same conclusions. REID in Scotland, and KANT in Germany, had the honor of originating these two movements, and the immediate object of both, at the outset, was to refute the doctrine of HUME. This is well known, in regard to REID; and KANT, in the introduction to his principal work, expressly states that he was led to undertake it, by a wish to answer the sophistry, in the relation of cause and effect, by which HUME had attempted to sap the foundation of all religion. The arguments of REID and KANT, however variously presented, and differing in many points of external form, resolve themselves alike, in the last result, into an appeal to the *consciousness* of every individual, as the source of his conviction of the certainty of knowledge, and the reality of moral distinctions. The argument is at bottom substantially the same with that by which Dr. JOHNSON replied, in the course of conversation, to a person who disputed the freedom of human action. "Sir," said the great moralist, in his usual emphatic style, "Sir, we know we are free, and there's an end on't."—REID, a clear and correct thinker, but a rather cold and dreary writer, attracted but little attention, until his views had been farther developed and recommended by the warm and graceful eloquence of STEWART; and even now, so entirely practical is the tendency of the public mind in England and this country, their philosophy can hardly be said to have become a subject of deep and general interest. In Germany, on the contrary, where the bent of public opinion is not less decidedly towards abstract and metaphysical pursuits, than it is with us towards those of practical life, the philosophy of KANT became, after a short interval, an object of universal interest, agitated for fifty years the whole intellectual world through all its depart-

ments, materially affected the aspect of poetry and polite literature, and finally, after passing through several successive transformations in the hands of his successors, crossed the Rhine,—a barrier, as Madame de STAEL well remarks, more difficult of passage for a book, than for an army of a hundred thousand men,—and is now, as developed by the brilliant and commanding eloquence of COUSIN, electrifying France, and rousing the eager attention of England and America.

The limits of the present occasion will, of course, prevent me from enlarging upon any branch of the subject, and especially upon one of so complex and abstract a character as metaphysical philosophy. But as the name of KANT has naturally presented itself in the course of our reflections, it may, perhaps, be amusing to you, to advert for a moment to some details of his personal habits and character. Figure to yourselves then, gentlemen, a little old man of the simplest appearance and manners,—Professor of Metaphysics in the University of Konigsburg, in Prussia,—who, though recognised as a person of ability, has gone on quietly lecturing, till the age of about sixty, without attracting in any way the public attention. Unmarried, unincumbered with the cares of a family, entirely absorbed in his favorite scientific pursuits, he rises every day at the same early hour of five, goes through the same routine of studies and lectures, takes a long solitary walk over the same ground, dines at home, commonly with two or three invited friends, at the same hour, and after another course of evening study, retires early to renew the same routine on the following day. This is hardly the sort of character, gentlemen, from which you would have expected a revolution in intellectual philosophy. But the highest results, especially in abstract science, are, after all, generally produced by a long course of close, undisturbed, solitary thinking. At length, the principal work of KANT, entitled an *Examination of pure Reason*, makes its ap-

pearance. It forms a single thick octavo volume. The style is repulsive and fatiguing to the last degree ; and is embarrassed by an entirely new nomenclature, which renders the work unintelligible, without the strongest effort of attention, even to those most familiar with the subject and the language. It falls apparently lifeless from the press. For three years it remains entirely unnoticed, and the publisher is on the point of sending the whole edition to be used as waste paper, when an article in one of the literary journals first directed the public attention to the work. Having once become an object of attention, the fatiguing and repulsive character of the style, was rather a recommendation than otherwise, with the patient Germans. They mastered the new nomenclature, a labor equivalent to that of learning a new language, and reached the substance of the doctrine. The leading principle, as I remarked just now, is the appeal to *consciousness*, or the original, internal conviction of the mind, as the evidence of the certainty of knowledge, and the reality of moral distinctions. This principle commanded at once the general assent, and triumphed, in a moment, over the wretched sophistry of the preceding school, which, in fact, retired from the field without a struggle. In the various commentaries, explanations, attacks and defences, which now followed each other in rapid succession, and which make up, in a great measure, the philosophical literature in Germany, for the last sixty years, the leading principle alluded to is generally admitted, and the controversy turns upon points of application and detail. In the mean time the modest philosopher emerges from obscurity, and becomes a shining mark for the gaze of admiring disciples. His lecture room is crowded ; his humble mansion overflows with visitors ; but without being much moved by this change in his position, he quietly pursues the even tenor of his way as before, and finally expires, at a very advanced age, without having ever left the city of Ko-

nigsburg, from the time when he entered it to take his place as Professor in the University.

What a contrast, gentlemen, between this quiet, laborious, unpretending existence, and the brilliant position of COUSIN, the present most prominent Representative of the German philosophy, or rather of the Scotch and German schools united, for he seems to have brought together these two different developements of the same principle, into one harmonious whole ! COUSIN was educated under the instruction of ROYER-COLLARD, in the doctrines of the Edinburgh school ; and in his earliest writings, confined himself to an exposition of them. He soon, however, became aware of the somewhat narrow and limited scope of their inquiries, and sought a new inspiration in the bolder daring and wider reach of the Germans. He also explored with singular zeal and assiduity, the rich field of the Greek philosophy, at its earlier and later periods. From the copious materials supplied by these various sources, and from the original exercise of his own acute and powerful mind, he has formed a system, which, with the recommendation of his brilliant eloquence, has created an extraordinary sensation throughout Europe, and given to its author a wider extent of personal influence and popularity than had ever been obtained by any merely metaphysical philosopher of modern times. The leading principle in his system is the same with that of KANT and REID. In developing his views, he follows very much the lead, and adopts, to a certain extent, the manner and language of the Germans. Like them, he is bold, excursive, systematic ; and sometimes, perhaps, like them, obscure and fanciful. But his doctrine, even when questionable, is always of a lofty and generous character, contrasting most honorably with the grovelling and debasing spirit of the sensual school. He included in the range of his inquiries the Philosophy of History ; a new science, as yet almost wholly untouched, although one of wider application, and

higher practical importance than almost any other. On this grand subject, his views, if not always convincing, are startling from their novelty, imposing by their vastness, and rendered plausible, at least, by the most brilliant and various illustrations. There is no doubt, however, that his lectures on this, and all other parts of his system derived their great popularity, chiefly from the attention of his commanding eloquence. They were delivered, extempore at the University of Paris, to audiences of not less than five or six thousand persons, and such was the interest, which they inspired, that they were regularly reported for the newspapers, like the proceedings of the political assemblies. I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance, at my last visit to Paris, and found his conversation not less rich, brilliant and instructive, than his lectures and writings. He was preparing at that time to devote a portion of his labor to practical politics, and said to me, at the last interview which I had with him, that he thought of yielding to the solicitations of some of his friends, who wished him to become a candidate for the House of Deputies. But before this arrangement could be carried into effect, a just appreciation of his merit, by the executive department of the government, placed him in the higher and more permanent situation of a Peer of France : a place to which he has done distinguished honor, by his splendid eloquence, exercised chiefly in unwearyed efforts in the cause of education and public improvement. He is still in the vigor of life, and may probably wield the sceptre of philosophy for twenty years to come. In his hands, it will always indicate the ascendancy of just principles, and elevated sentiments.

But Philosophy, even in its most attractive form, and when aided by the charms of the most seductive eloquence, addresses itself to a comparatively very limited portion of society, while the influence of polite literature is almost universal. The reaction that took place in literature

against the immoral spirit of the sensual school, was, therefore, practically, even more important than the philosophical reform to which I have adverted. Literature, which in the hands of VOLTAIRE and his contemporaries was rapidly becoming licentious, had degenerated, in those of their successors, as I have already remarked, into a sink of open and undisguised pollution. It had already struck an incurable taint to the very core of society, especially in France, when the reaction, to which I have alluded, commenced with the writings of the celebrated ROUSSEAU.

The names of VOLTAIRE and ROUSSEAU are commonly associated together, and rightly so, as those of the two most prominent persons in the literature of the last century. In most other respects, they have not only very little in common, but stand, in regard to each other, in the most direct and pointed opposition. Though both Frenchmen, and both inhabiting, for many years, the little territory of Geneva, they never saw each other, and were totally unlike in their moral dispositions, their intellectual powers and habits, and their modes of life. VOLTAIRE, in his moral character, was light, cheerful, satirical. ROUSSEAU, grave, stern, and serious, even to insanity. Their literary characteristics correspond with these differences. VOLTAIRE, fluent, copious, graceful, pointed, and brilliant, but withal superficial. ROUSSEAU, with not less point and elegance, rich, nervous, original, profound; a keen and close reasoner, thinking powerfully, and expressing his thoughts in "words that burn." Their respective courses of life may have contributed to increase these differences, which were, no doubt, in part, inherent in their original constitutions. VOLTAIRE, belonging by extraction to the middling class, raised himself at once by the seductive charm of his manner, to an intimate familiarity with the very highest circles, with which he continued to identify himself through life. ROUSSEAU was

the son of a poor mechanic, and being naturally of a reserved and timid, as well as proud and aspiring character, made himself known very slowly to the world. He passed the first forty years of his life in obscurity, and in the humblest social relations,—occasionally as low as that of a domestic servant. Even in his later periods, after he had acquired his great reputation, and was visited, as an object of curiosity, by the most distinguished persons from all parts of Europe, he could find no better method of supplying himself with the ordinary means of subsistence, than that of copying music at a fixed price by the sheet.

Crushed to the earth by this overwhelming load of humiliation, while he was conscious all the time of possessing intellectual powers of the highest order, his whole soul revolted against a condition of society, which was fraught for him with so much injustice. Hence the staple of his writings is a stern and bitter denunciation of the existing institutions, political, social, and religious; a constant inculcation of the absolute necessity of searching, unflinching, thorough-going, radical reform. In this particular, his object is the same with that of VOLTAIRE; and this agreement in the practical tendency of their writings, is one principal reason why their names are so frequently classed together. But the spirit, in which they respectively labor to effect this reform, is any thing but similar. VOLTAIRE, while he laughs at the follies and vices of the great, belongs, by his manners and habits of life, to their circle. His morality, like theirs, is loose and sensual. ROUSSEAU sees the excesses of the higher classes of society without having it in his power to enjoy the luxuries with which they are associated. Hence he is led to attack the immorality of the age, and the sophistry by which it is defended, not less vigorously, than the essential errors in the frame-work of government. Fatigued by unsuccessful efforts to emerge from obscurity, distracted by the cares and passions of life, he at length seizes, with a

sort of agonising grasp, one great principle ; the necessity of appealing to nature; from the abuses and corruptions of society. This principle is the Polar Star, by which he steers his course in his subsequent writings. It coincides, in substance, with that which formed the basis of the philosophical reform, to which I have adverted. The reformers in philosophy, appealed from the cloudy mystifications of a malignant sophistry, to the original, instructive convictions of the mind. ROUSSEAU brought the practical abuses of society, to the judgment seat of the uncorrupted heart. In applying and carrying out this principle, he is often mistaken, extravagant ; but it cannot be denied that the principle itself is grand, lucid, and substantially true.

In his first literary effort of any consequence, ROUSSEAU exhibited at once the beauty of his principle, and the wildest reach of extravagance to which it could possibly be carried. A literary institution, in one of the provincial cities of France, offered a prize for the best essay on the comparative advantage of savage and social life. In the one which ROUSSEAU wrote, and which gained the prize, he enlarges in the most eloquent and convincing terms upon the abuses of existing institutions, and the advantages of a state of nature ; but he falls into the fatal error of supposing this state of nature to be a state of individual independence in the absence of all society ; as if there was no medium between a corrupt and abusive form of society, and no society at all ; or as if a state of individual independence were in itself possible. It does not seem to occur to him, in the ardor of his zeal, that reform is one thing and destruction another ; that *society* is itself the natural state of man, and is the more conformable to his nature in proportion as it is more perfect as a form of society. The power and beauty of the style, in connexion with the essential correctness of the leading principle, attracted the public attention, and fixed at once the reputation of the author. In his other works

which followed in rapid succession, he pursues substantially the same track, and displays the same mixture of truth and extravagance, in the same rich, nervous, and polished style. The style of Rousseau, which is generally regarded as the most finished form in which the French language has ever been exhibited, was so remarkable, that it became during his life time a matter of curiosity to ascertain the secret of its excellence. A principal of one of the Jesuits' colleges, inquired of him one day, how he had been able to write so well. *I said what I thought*, was the reply of the somewhat unceremonious citizen of Geneva, conveying at once, and in the shortest possible form, the best exposition of his own system, and the most significant rebuke of that, which was attributed to the inquirer.

The most important works of ROUSSEAU, are the *New Eloisa*, the *Emilius*, and the *Social Contract*. The first, which is a series of philosophical essays in the form of a novel, was devoured in the latter character by one class of readers, and studied with intense interest in the former, by another. It is far too free in its moral tone, for the more correct taste of the present age; but for that very reason, was probably more useful at the time when it was written; the moral feeling of the reading classes having then become so corrupt, that a work in a purer and better taste, would have stood no chance of being read. The *Emilius*, on the whole the most perfect and finished of ROUSSEAU's works, is essentially an essay on education; but the subject is treated in so large and comprehensive a way, that it naturally leads to observations on almost every topic of high moral interest. It includes among other things the celebrated *Confession of the Savoyard Vicar*, one of the most eloquent defences of natural religion, and of revelation under some of its aspects, that has ever appeared. Although ROUSSEAU has sometimes been classed among infidels, it was not without reason that he was

rather pettishly described by HUME in conversation as "no better than a christian in his own way." His *Social Contract*, entitles him to the praise of an ardent, if not always judicious and well directed love of liberty. This work purports to be a portion of a larger one, which the author had projected, but never executed. It is written with great power, spirit and eloquence, and has essentially aided the cause of liberty in Europe, although the doctrine will hardly bear a strict examination. The idea of founding society and government upon a contract between individuals, though somewhat plausible, is, to say the least of it, by no means clear of doubt. Society is, in fact, as I just now remarked, the natural state of man; and any theory, which supposes it to be artificially formed on whatever principles, must be essentially erroneous in its very foundation.

AS ROUSSEAU advanced in years, he became, by the effect of these successive publications, with the exception of VOLTAIRE, the most popular writer in Europe. Enthusiastically admired by the fair and young, who compose the mass of the reading public, he was, at the same time, studied by the deepest thinkers, and even consulted by nations upon the arrangement of their political institutions. One of his published works is a reply to a distinguished Polish nobleman, who had addressed him a letter in the name of some deliberative assembly upon a projected reform in the government. This was an extent of popularity and influence, which even VOLTAIRE had hardly attained, and which has, perhaps, never fallen to the lot of any other man than ROUSSEAU. It is melancholy to reflect how little this extraordinary success contributed to his happiness. Compelled, at the height of his reputation, by his own total want of worldly wisdom, and by the culpable neglect of those who ought to have provided for him, to earn by a merely mechanical employment of the most laborious character, a bare subsistence;—wretched

by his own fault in his social and family relations, he passed his life in the depths of almost uninterrupted gloom, which, at length, in his later years, impaired the integrity of his understanding, and drove him, in a fit of insanity, to the commission of suicide. He furnishes one of the fatal instances, so frequent in the history of men of genius, which vindicate but too successfully the ways of Providence, in the distribution of the gifts of intellect, and prove that the possessors of the loftiest talents have too much reason, so far as their own happiness is concerned, to covet rather than despise the lot of unambitious; but, as Horace well calls it, *golden mediocrity*.

The brilliant success of the writings of ROUSSEAU, gave a new direction to the public taste, in polite literature, and led to the gradual formation of a new school, directly opposite in its spirit and character to that which had been fashionable through the earlier part of the century. ST. PIERRE, the personal friend of ROUSSEAU, though considerably younger, led the way by his charming *Paul and Virginia*. Madame de STAEL, then a young lady in her teens, made her brilliant *début* on the literary stage, which was afterwards to her the scene of so much glory, by her *Letters on the character and writings of Rousseau*. CHATEAUBRIAND, under the influence of the same inspiration, poured out the first flowings of his powerful and prolific genius in his learned and vigorous, though somewhat immature *Essay on Revolutions*. Similar circumstances produced at the same time a similar result in other parts of Europe. WIELAND, the VOLTAIRE of Germany, not less gay and graceful, though happily far more decorous than the Patriarch of Ferney, was yet compelled, in the noon day of his glory, to yield the palm of popularity and influence to SCHILLER and GOETHE, who had drawn their inspiration from the higher sources of nature and SHAKESPEARE. In England, where, as I have remarked, polite literature, was at this time at a low ebb, Dr. JOHNSON,

in himself a host,—a poet in all his writings, even to his Dictionary, defended, almost alone, for thirty years, the citadel of truth, against the inroads of an immoral sophistry, until the CAMPBELLS, SCOTTS, COLERIDGES, SOUTHS and WORDSWORTHS, the JEFFREYS, GIFFORDS, and BROUGHAMS, the MACKINTOSHES and BURKES of later years came on to the rescue. In short, gentlemen, there has been since the time of ROUSSEAU, and the opening of the French Revolution, no writer of commanding genius in any part of Europe, who has followed in the track of the French school, with perhaps, the exception of the great English brother poets, BYRON and MOORE ; and even in these, the licentious and frivolous French spirit, which predominates in some of their works, is tempered and mixed up with so much powerful thought and true and deep feeling, that we plainly see the triumph of the better principle, even in minds where the worse exercises but too much influence.

While a strong, spontaneous reaction was thus taking place, against the immoral spirit that had previously prevailed in literature, the practical results of that spirit were rendered more apparent than they had ever been before, by the horrors that marked the commencement of the French Revolution. These are a standing reproach upon the cause of liberty, and the principle of liberty is often held responsible for their occurrence. This charge, gentlemen, as I have already intimated, is unjust and untrue. It was not any error in the principles of government, professed by the friends of liberty in France ; but it was the looseness of their notions, on the relations of private life, and on the solemn responsibilities of man to his Creator, which blasted for a time the fruits of all their political exertions. The heroes of the earliest period of the Revolution, many of them persons of the highest talents and the best intentions, had generally been brought up in the atheistical school of morals and religion. MIRABEAU, the Colossus of his country's freedom, the JOHN ADAMS of the

French Revolution,—was, by general acknowledgment, the most immoral man of his age. His younger brother, the Viscount de MIRABEAU, also a person of distinguished talent and great looseness of morals, but eclipsed in both respects by his elder brother the Count, was accustomed to remark, that “in any other family he should have been a wit and a rogue, but that in his own, he was a fool and a saint.” MIRABEAU had a maxim, which was truly characteristic of the man, but of which it is somewhat difficult to give a literal English translation. *La petite morale tue la grande.* “Good morals in little things, are fatal to good morals in great things.” The meaning is, that a person who scrupulously observes all the moral rules for private conduct, will find himself so much hampered that he will never be able to succeed in any great enterprise, and, consequently, will never be able to practice good morals on a large scale. The idea is rather ingenious, but, as I need not say, is directly the reverse of the truth. A scrupulous observance of all the rules of private conduct, is, generally speaking, absolutely indispensable, in every individual, to the full developement of his capacity for public usefulness; and he will consequently, other circumstances being equal, be more useful as a public man, in proportion as he is more correct as a private one. A comparison of the private lives of the leaders of the American and French Revolutions, would go far to account for the difference in their character and results; and the example of MIRABEAU himself furnished the most complete refutation that could possibly have been given, of his own theory. The ultimate failure of all his efforts to make himself useful to his country and the world, may be traced immediately to the gross licentiousness of his private life, which compelled him, though possessed of talents as splendid, perhaps, as Providence ever bestowed upon a human being, to pass his earlier years in disgrace, poverty, imprisonment, and exile, and

finally terminated his life, at the moment when he had obtained something like a fair field for the exercise of his powers, and might, perhaps, have succeeded in guiding the fiery car of Revolution to the desired goal of regulated liberty. The acts of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, which abolished marriage, set aside public worship, and declared death an eternal sleep, sufficiently evinced, that the sentiments of the majority of the lawgivers of France were in unison with those of MIRABEAU and the atheistical school. Such was at this time the intense aversion to religious ideas, that when BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE read before the French Academy an essay in proof of the existence of God, it was actually resented by several members as a personal affront, in the usual form of a challenge to single combat. The rivers of innocent blood, that, for years in succession, daily ran down the streets of Paris, furnished the natural commentary on the political effect of these principles. But this state of things was too violent and unnatural to last; and the leaders in these horrors, at their worst period, seem to have felt at last that power, however fearfully exerted, must have some basis in moral and religious principle. ROBESPIERRE himself, not long before his death, condescended to extend his patronage to the Supreme Being, decreed his existence and established a public festival in his honor. The Directory, which succeeded ROBESPIERRE in the government, re-established public worship under a fantastic form of their own creation. Finally, NAPOLEON, though false to the cause of liberty, was too true to his own interest not to perceive that his empire, to be solid, must rest upon Religion. Sweeping off with his iron sceptre the paltry mummary of the revolutionary school, he re-opened the desecrated churches, and restored public worship in the venerable forms of the ancient Catholic faith.

Religion and morality were now once more in repute, and a new vigor was, of course, imparted to the impulse

in their favor, which, as I remarked just now, had commenced in literature before the opening of the Revolution. NAPOLEON extended his patronage and favor to the fine spirits, already mentioned, who had first followed that impulse. ST. PIERRE was rewarded by a pension, and an apartment in the Palace. He was also offered a seat in the Senate, which would have brought with it a large increase of his pension ; but this he nobly declined ; not choosing to throw the mantle of his brilliant European reputation over the political conduct of this great Apostate from the cause of liberty. I had the pleasure, at this period of his life, of meeting at Paris with the author of Paul and Virginia. He was then an aged man, on the verge of fourscore, of the most venerable appearance, with long white locks, flowing down loosely over his shoulders. The amiable spirit which prevails in his writings, had secured him through life the favor of the sex ; and he had, not long before, espoused in second nuptials a noble and beautiful young lady of about seventeen, who scrupled not to entwine with the fresh roses of her first love, a brow, which, though white with the frost of nearly fourscore winters, was radiant with the two fold light of benevolence and glory. A living Paul and Virginia, the fruits of a former marriage, played round his knees. He had been long unfortunate in the earlier part of his life, but for many years before his death he was a happy man. ST. PIERRE hardly realised, in his later productions, the brilliant promise of the first. The stormy period of the Revolution afforded, in fact, to persons of his way of thinking, very little scope for literary effort. His larger works, entitled *Studies of Nature* and *Harmonies of Nature*, though containing many thrilling passages and written throughout in a beautiful style, are now not much read. His reputation rests on that charming little work, in which his ardent love and true feeling of nature, speak, through the medium of a simple pastoral tale, directly to the hearts

of the fair and young. Their tears will embalm his memory, and their sweet voices will sing his praise in distant lands and future ages, when his own larger works, with the bulky productions of many other writers of no small note in their day, are forgotten.

CHATEAUBRIAND, who had emigrated at the opening of the Revolution, now returned to France, a wiser man than when he published his first immature production, and soon after committed to press his *Essay on the Genius of Christianity*, including the little romance of *Atala*, which appeared separately in advance, as a lure to the public attention. The brilliant style, and lofty moral and religious tone of the *Genius of Christianity*, aided very much in accomplishing the change, which had long been in progress in the spirit of polite literature. NAPOLEON felt the value of such co-operation. He immediately employed the author in the diplomatic service, and raised him rapidly to the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary. But M. de CHATEAUBRIAND was pretty soon disgusted with the arbitrary character of the administration of NAPOLEON, and surrendered the political honors which he could only retain by what he considered a sacrifice of principle. He furnishes another example, in addition to that of St. PIERRE just mentioned, and our own illustrious LAFAYETTE, of a distinguished Frenchman who preferred independent poverty to the splendid servitude of the Imperial Court. Learning gained what the state lost. From that time to this, through all the vicissitudes of a varied life, he has continued to pour forth an uninterrupted series of publications, sometimes literary, sometimes political,—always powerful and brilliant,—which, in the opinion of many, have established his claim to the rank of the greatest writer of the day. After the fall of NAPOLEON, the force of his pen raised him to the high station of Minister of Foreign Affairs,—which, however, he sacrificed soon after, rather than concur in what he considered unreasonable demands

in the head of the government. He now threw himself into the opposition, and the effect of his writings furnishes, perhaps, the strongest proof that has ever been given of the political influence of mere literature. The dynasty of CHARLES X. fell before the pen of CHATEAUBRIAND. But though hostile to the King, he was true to the Royal family; and refusing to recognise the new settlement, has remained ever since in retirement,—pouring forth volume after volume, with the same inexhaustible fertility as before, up to the present day. His manner of composition has been, however, for many years past, too rapid to admit the condensation of thought and perfection of language which are indispensable to real excellence; and his merely literary reputation rests, after all, very much upon his Genius of Christianity, and especially the little romance of Atala, which is incorporated in it. In this production, the scene of which is laid in the southern States of this Union, the interest results from the triumph of religious feeling, in the heart of a lovely young woman, over the strongest earthly passions. Though less sweet and touching than Paul and Virginia, it is obviously the effusion of a loftier genius. The opinions of M. de CHATEAUBRIAND upon the character and institutions of this country, as expressed in his writings and in his conversation, to which I had occasionally the pleasure of listening while in Europe, were highly favorable. He visited the United States in the course of his youthful travels, and has given some very interesting descriptions of our natural scenery, and also of the state of society and the characters of prominent men, in his work entitled *Recollections of America*. We are indebted to him for the striking and profound remark, embodied in one of his published works, that “the idea of a pure Representative Republic, as exhibited for the first time in the Constitution of the United States of America, is the most brilliant scientific discovery of modern times.”

The complete success of M. de CHATEAUBRIAND established the triumph of the new school of polite literature. A host of imitators followed, the most remarkable of whom is M. de la MARTINE, a pupil not inferior in power or brilliancy to his master, and possessing the talent of versification, in which CHATEAUBRIAND is deficient. The prose style of M. de la MARTINE has, for most foreigners at least, more charm than his verse. *His travels in the East* are one of the most interesting productions of modern times. Count de MAISTRE, M. de BOUALD, and others have also earned a high reputation by works of a similar general tendency, though varying very much in style and subject. But the influence of this whole class of writers is somewhat diminished, especially in Protestant countries, by the great importance which they attach to the peculiar doctrines and even the mere ceremonial forms of the Catholic Church. Hence the writings of Madame de STAEL are a more correct expression of the spirit of the present literary period, and may be dwelt upon, as such, with greater advantage. It is also agreeable to be able to present to you a female writer, as the breathing representative of this improved spirit. It was right and proper, that a sex, which owes its present honorable position, on a footing of entire social equality with the other, to the influence of Religion, should reward the service, by furnishing from its own ranks perhaps the most effective champion that has yet appeared, of the reality and value of the Religious sentiment, considered independently of the forms and doctrines belonging to particular modes of belief.

This distinguished writer received her education at the brilliant Court of LOUIS XVI. where her father, M. NECKAR, was at the time Prime Minister. She might naturally have been expected to derive from such a position a taste for the elegancies and frivolities of fashionable life, rather than the deep things of philosophy and learning. But the

influence of her parents, both of whom were persons of the highest order of intellect, and that of the society which they drew around them, seems to have overpowered the natural tendency resulting from her situation in the world. Her talents, originally of the most extraordinary character, developed themselves at a very early age. She mingled, while a mere child, on an equal footing, in the conversations of the men of letters, who frequented her father's house; and her *Letters on the writings and character of Rousseau*, which exhibit the depth of thought that belongs to a mature mind, were written at the age of about seventeen. She continued, after her father's retirement from office, to reside at Paris, as the wife of the Swedish Ambassador, Baron de STAEL-HOLSTEIN; and at this time, she wrote several lighter works, probably for the purpose of attaching to her name a popularity that would ensure a more general reception to her more elevated productions. In these lighter works, her genius, of which the essential characteristics were deep thought and warm feeling, rather than poetical invention, appears to little advantage; and it was not until the publication of *Corinna*, that she did full justice to her powers and established a completely European reputation. This charming work is essentially a poem, on the fallen greatness and glory of ancient Italy,—one of the most attractive subjects that could well be imagined, but which singularly enough, though more than once attempted, yet had never before been treated with any degree of success. As a romance, the work has no great value. *Corinna* is the only character of much interest, and she is interesting by what she says, rather than what she does. We feel that it is Madame de STAEL herself in a poetical dress; or rather the Genius of Italy, breathing out in fitting strains of the deepest melancholy, her lamentations over the decaying monuments of her departed glory. The reputation of Madame de STAEL was raised still higher by her work on

Germany, in which she threw aside the form of romance, and confined herself to a simple, but eloquent and powerful expression of her personal observations and feelings. Here too she exhibits more fully and forcibly than in her other writings, the deep religious feeling which constitutes one of their peculiarities, and renders them the most appropriate expression of the spirit of the age. Her *Ten Years in Exile*, and her *Considerations on the French Revolution*, are splendid fragments, which make us regret still more deeply her untimely death. The latter, had she completed it, would have been her greatest work; the former probably the most entertaining.

The interest felt by the public in her writings, was very much increased by the personal warfare which was kept up against her by NAPOLEON, and the courage and resources which she displayed in resisting it. It was the Queen of Letters, contending with the Emperor of the world. She was well aware of the influences of this circumstance upon her reputation, and said one day to the Emperor: "Sire! you are giving me a sad celebrity; I shall occupy a page in your history." Aware of her noble independence, and liberal spirit, he fears to trust himself within the sphere of her personal influence, and prohibits her residing at Paris. In vain she solicits a relaxation of this rigorous sentence. The Minister of Police politely informs her that the air of the Metropolis is not good for her health, and that she must seek refreshment in the mountains of Switzerland. Her father, M. NECKAR, had lent two millions of francs to the French Government, at a very doubtful period in the state of the finances. Madame de STAEL now demands payment for this sum, as a just debt. She is informed, on application, that she cannot receive it, without giving satisfactory evidence of attachment to the person of NAPOLEON. "I knew," said she in reply, "that in order to recover a debt, it was necessary for the creditor to substantiate his claim by suffi-

cient evidence, but I did not know, that it was necessary to make a declaration of love to the debtor." The debt remained unpaid until after the restoration of the BOURBONS, when it placed her in affluence for the rest of her life.

After her exile from Paris, Madame de STAEL retired to the paternal seat at Copet, in Switzerland, where she devoted her leisure to letters, and attention to the old age of her father, whom she tenderly loved. But the jealousy of NAPOLEON pursued her to this retreat, and compelled her to take refuge in England, which she reached by a circuitous route through Germany, Russia, and England, all direct intercourse between France and England being at that time cut off by the existing war. On arriving at London, she found herself, at once, surrounded by a circle of admirers, and recognised as a ruling power in the world of letters. The literary society of London was at that time unusually brilliant, and comprehended many individuals of the highest rank and widest political influence. SCOTT was blazing in full-orbed splendor at the meridian of his glory, while BYRON was just shooting, like a bright, fitful meteor, across the literary sky. In a lower order, the CAMPBELLS, the ROGERSES, the MOORES, the SOUTHEYS, the WORDSWORTHS, the GIFFORDS, mingled in friendly circles with the most distinguished names in either house of Parliament and in general society,—the HALLAMS, the JEFFREYS, the BROUGHAMS, the LANDSDOWNES, the CANNINGS. Above them all shone conspicuous as the great light of conversation and society, MACKINTOSH, just returned from India, rich in the various stores of all departments of moral science and political learning, and pouring them forth, on all occasions, with boundless prodigality, in torrents of the purest and richest eloquence. Madame de STAEL, not less illustrious than himself for conversational powers, contested with him from day to day the palm of victory in this truly civil war, and fairly

divided with him the empire of society. The spirit that pervaded these circles, in which I had occasionally the pleasure of going, as a young listener, was entirely in unison with that which prevails in the writings of Madame de STAEL, and in the present school of polite learning: free from bigotry, released from a slavish subjection to names and forms, but, at the same time, pure, ardent, generous, and devoted enthusiastically to the great interests of man, Religion and Liberty.

Just at this period occurred the crisis in the affairs of Europe. The military master of the Continent had been hurled from his seat of power, and, after one desperate but ineffectual effort to recover it, had sunk forever. The Allied Sovereigns, after sealing their triumph at the Thuilleries, repaired to London to congratulate the Queen of the Ocean, in her own island, upon their common success. They, too, were all, at this moment, not merely elate with the flush of victory, but swelling with noble sentiments and full of the fairest promises to the friends of liberty, too many of which have since in calmer hours been forgotten. Their presence gave new life and splendor to the social circles of the British Metropolis, and with this glittering caravan, Madame de STAEL returned to Paris, where she fixed her residence for the brief remainder of her life. Reinstated in the possession of an ample fortune,—borne aloft on the full tide of fame and success,—she figured conspicuously, as the presiding genius of polite learning and liberal principles, till death too soon arrested her career. To her influence is the world very much indebted for the seriousness, the generosity of sentiment, the enthusiastic ardor for religion and liberty, which form the characteristics of the present school of polite learning, in contradistinction from the sensuality and frivolousness that prevailed in the last.

Lord BYRON, in a sonnet written at Geneva, classes Madame de STAEL with ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, and GIBBON.

ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, our GIBBON, and DE STAEL :
 Leman ! these names are worthy of thy shore ;
 Thy shore of names like these. Wert thou no more,
 Their memory thy remembrance would recall.

Nothing could have brought these names into connexion with hers, but the accidental circumstance, that those who bore them resided in the same vicinity.—ROUSSEAU is the only one of them whose genius has the remotest affinity with that of Madame de STAEL. VOLTAIRE and GIBBON were the spirit of mockery personified. ROUSSEAU was serious, profound, enthusiastic, like the daughter of NECKAR; but in him the developement of these sentiments had been very much vitiated by the influence of the age in which he lived. In her writings they flow forth, in a stream as fresh and pure as it is deep, copious and swelling, to diffuse fertility through the vast domain of letters. Madame de STAEL was an enthusiastic admirer of the institutions of this country; and at one time, when she was pursued by the jealousy of NAPOLEON into the remotest corners of Europe, contemplated fixing her residence among us. As a citizen of the United State, it gives me pleasure to lay this humble tribute of respect upon her monument, which, like that of all the truly great, is to be found in her works.

In her work on Germany, Madame de STAEL rendered the same service to the German literature, which, as I remarked just now, had been done before by COUSIN to the German philosophy. She made it known to France, and, in fact, to the whole west of Europe and America. Through her it was discovered that the same revolution, which had taken place in France in the tone of literature, had also occurred in Germany:—that materialism and mockery had yielded the sway to the serious spirit of Philanthropy, Piety, and the love of Liberty. The master minds of SCHILLER and GOETHE led the way in this reform. Of these, the former too soon disappeared from this earthly stage: the latter continued, till a very recent pe-

riod, to wield the sceptre of German, I might perhaps say, of European literature. The change which they effected in the spirit of learning, was congenial with the naturally noble, generous, and enthusiastic German character. It had the happiest effect on the political situation of Europe, by contributing, in no small degree, to generate among the German youth the zeal for independence and liberty, which finally secured their emancipation from the yoke of France. It would give me pleasure, gentlemen, to dwell at length upon this interesting branch of the subject ; but the limits of the occasion, which I have already much exceeded, compel me to refrain.

In this rapid review of the literary spirit of the last and present century, I have adverted less to the writers of England, than those of the Continent, partly because the former are more familiar to you, and partly because the change that I have described, has been less conspicuous in them than in those of France and Germany. In truth, the immoral school of learning never obtained in England an extensive popularity. A few isolated writers, of whom the principal are HUME and GIBBON, had imbibed its poisonous spirit, but their works were too grave and voluminous to produce much impression on the public mind. Dr. JOHNSON, the acknowledged monarch of letters, stood, as I remarked just now, for twenty years in succession, at the entrance of the citadel of learning, with his flaming sword of wit, and his Herculean club of logic,—like the angel at the gates of Eden, to repel every inroad of doubtful aspect. BURKE guarded with equal success the temple of political science. The poetry of this period, though scanty, is all as chaste as it is highly finished. Every line in JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH, GRAY, and COLLINS, is, morally as well as poetically, a gem of the purest water ; and where the stream bubbled up more copiously on the *Forth*, it was still as clear of all stain or pollution, as

———Siloa's brook, that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God.—

CAMPBELL, ROGERS, SOUTHEY, and SCOTT, are all, in this respect, of the right stamp. What a noble enthusiasm for humanity, liberty, religion, animates the *Pleasure of Hope!* How charmingly the milder lights of refinement and love shine through the classic pages of the Bard of *Memory!* How soon the Laureate recovers from the first effervescence of thoughtless youth, and strings his regenerated lyre to the highest strains of Patriotism and Piety! How faithfully the great Magician of the North, in all his multifarious voyages in the enchanted seas of Poetry and Romance, steers his bark by the Polar Star of perennial Truth! How fervid, and yet how active and poetical, is the piety of HANNAH MORE! How pure and impressive, though unsanctified by religious views, the morality of MARIA EDGORTH! It is only since the recent apparition of BYRON and MOORE, that we find in the polite literature of England, licentiousness arrayed in the dress of the finest poetry. But even in them, as I said before, the better feeling often gains the ascendancy; and it is worthy of remark, that their highest and happiest strains are those in which they yield, as it were involuntarily, to the strong promptings of the spirit of truth: as the Prophet of old, who was sent for to curse Israel, when required to bless him, seemed to do it with a relish. What a bright beam of real sunshine passes over the meretricious beauty of *Don Juan*, when the poet, in the midst of his orgies, breaks out suddenly into that lofty and pathetic elegy on the fortunes of Greece! Never, perhaps, did the genius of lyric poetry weave a strain of higher mood.

The Isles of Greece! the Isles of Greece!
 Where burning Sappho loved and sung;
 Where grew the arts of war and peace,
 Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung,
 Eternal summer gilds them yet,
 But all, except their sun, is set.

The mountains look on Marathon,
 And Marathon looks on the sea;

And musing there an hour alone,
 I dreamed that Greece might yet be free;
 For standing on the Persian's grave,
 How could I think myself a slave?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
 Our virgins dance beneath the shade:
 I see their glorious, bright eyes shine,
 While, gazing on each glowing maid,
 Mine own the burning tear-drops lave,
 To think such breasts should suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunwin's marbled steep,
 Where nothing save the waves and I
 May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
 There, swan-like, let me sing and die.
 A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine!
 Dash down your cup of Samian wine!

In his *Hebrew Melodies*, again, with what ardent feeling and finished perfection of style, he runs over all the topics that most deeply interest the reflecting mind. Then, indeed, he almost realises his own splendid eulogy on the monarch minstrel of Israel.

The harp the monarch swept,
 The King of Men, the Loved of Heaven,
 Which Music hallowed, while she wept
 O'er tones, her Heart of Hearts had given;
 Redoubled be her tears!—its chords are riven.

And MOORE, too, when the glow of patriotism kindles in his bosom, "how he makes" the chords of his too effeminate lyre, ring with notes of the loftiest sublimity and the purest pathos.

Remember thee? Yes! while there's life in this heart
 I can never forget thee, all lone as thou art;
 More dear is thy sorrow, thy gloom and thy showers,
 Than the rest of the world in its sunniest hours.

Wert thou all that I wish thee, great, glorious and free,
 First flower of the earth, and first gem of the sea,
 I could hail thee with brighter, with happier brow,
 But, oh! could I love thee more deeply than now?

No ! thy chains, as they rankle, thy blood as it runs,
 But make thee more painfully dear to thy sons,
 As the hearts of the young in the desert birds rest,
 Drink Love with each life-drop that flows from her breast.

While these great poets are rendering a doubtful homage to the cause of truth, another class, of deeper thought and better feeling, though perhaps less dazzling brilliancy of style, appeal at once for inspiration, like the minstrel of *Paradise Lost*, to the high and holy source of religious sentiment and religious truth. With what calm and graceful majesty the Eagle of Cumberland sails through the liquid vault of air ! How the wayward bard of the *Ancient Mariner*, just for once to his own powers, lifts from the cloud-cap summits of the Alps a hymn to their Creator, not unequal in magnificence and beauty to the scene that inspired it !

Philosophy joins her steadier voice to the rapt strains of her inspired sister. With what touching eloquence she speaks through the pages of STEWART ! How full and fresh the flood of benevolence and sympathy, springs up from its secret source in the pure heart of MACKINTOSH ! How the wise and good rejoice, when BROUGHAM lays down upon the altar of divine truth, the tribute of the mightiest mind that has adorned the magistracy of England, since the age of BACON !

It is to this correct moral condition of public opinion and of literature, that the world is indebted for the apparent safety with which our mother country is now pursuing her way through the storms of Revolution. It is not, gentlemen, as I have already remarked, the true spirit of Reform and Liberty, which endangers the tranquility of nations : it was not such a spirit, which deluged the streets of Paris, for years in succession during the French Revolution, with innocent blood. No, gentlemen, it is the false and foul spirit of licentiousness, immorality and irreligion, that sometimes personates the other, and urges

on individuals and communities to their ruin. As a friend of liberty, I rejoice most sincerely, when I see her friends in the old, "fast anchored isle," rubbing off the rust that has crept round her venerable institutions in the long lapse of a thousand years, and bringing them into harmony with the wants and the spirit of the times. In this great work, they have my warmest sympathy and my best wishes for their success; but it is not only, nor chiefly, for the zeal and energy with which they have thus far carried it on, that I admire them most. These are qualities of the highest value, but of common occurrence. No, gentlemen, it is when I see them effecting this mighty Reform without violence,—for I count as nothing, a little sparring in the newspapers,—a few angry words at the elections,—without violence,—without commotion,—without bloodshed: when I see that they not only wish to be free, but know how to be just, which the French did not:—when I see them tempering valor with discretion,—the zeal for liberty with a careful regard for the restraints of Religion, Morals and Law;—it is then, gentlemen, that I argue well for the ultimate success of the enterprise in which they are engaged:—it is then that I am proud, as an American, of our noble mother country. She has much, gentlemen, in every way to boast of, that illustrious Queen of the Isle. That the sun never sets on her dominions,—that the Eastern and Western Indies pour forth their wealth into her lap,—that her children are conspicuous in every department of art and science,—that her "flag has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze;"—these are glorious things to be said with truth of a little cluster of islands in a corner of the ocean. But of all her glories that which I should value most highly were I one of her children, of which I feel most proud as a foreigner of kindred blood, is the last, the one which she is now achieving;—that of maintaining, as a nation, the supremacy of reason and humanity, in the midst of

the sternest conflicts of contending parties,—of governing the tumult of popular excitement at its wildest heights of frenzy,—of taming, as it were, the monster Revolution himself, and guiding him upon his headlong course, by the silken rein of Law. There, gentlemen, I behold something different from ordinary greatness. There I recognise the mistress of the world in the science of regulated liberty. There I hail the countrymen of ALFRED, HAMDEN, LOCKE, CHATHAM, and BURKE;—the land of *Magna Charta*, of the *Habeas Corpus* act,—of the Trial by Jury,—of the Liberty of the Press; of the British Constitution. There I witness the superiority of the old Anglo-Saxon stock over all others, at least for the construction of social and political institutions. Who does not offer up prayer for the success of our glorious mother country in this grand enterprise of Reform, so nobly conceived, thus far so happily executed? Gentlemen, she must obtain success, for she has proved, thus far at least, that she deserves it.

Our country, too, gentlemen, I am proud to say, has justified in a similar manner her claim to a legitimate descent from the same common ancestry. Here too, as in England, the tide of public opinion, and of learning as its expression, has always, even at the highest floods of popular excitement, kept itself pure from all stain. To this we owe it, gentlemen, that whenever the reign of Law has been temporarily interrupted, Religion and Morals have thrown their sacred shield over property and the private relations of life. To this we owe it, that personal right of every kind were, in general, preserved inviolate through the revolutionary war, and through the dangerous crisis that preceded the establishment of the Federal Constitution: that they have since been preserved inviolate, or with little infringement, through a period of nearly half a century, under a greater freedom from the restraints of positive law, than was ever enjoyed by any other commu-

nity. This, gentlemen, I consider as the brightest, the crowning glory of our country. When I reflect on the situation of that country, territorial and political, and compare it with that of others, I see much to admire on our side, and little to covet in the condition of even the greatest and most favored nations of the earth. This vast expanse of territory,—with its exhaustless fertility,—its wealth of waters, woods and rivers,—its cloud-capt mountains, boundless plains and ocean lakes :—this tide of population, which is constantly pouring itself out in a fertilizing flow upon the bosom of our continental paradise :—this unexampled success in agriculture, manufactures and commerce,—in policy and war,—in every useful and ornamental branch of art and science :—this family of new natives, rising one after another into being, as by enchantment, in the depths of an unexplored wilderness,—this hitherto untried principle of Representative Democracy, quietly working out its beautiful wonders,—*speciosa miracula*, 'in each :—above all, this Union of the States, which binds them together in one “golden,” and I trust, “everlasting chain” of perpetual peace :—these, gentlemen, are the elements and outward demonstrations of our national greatness. I am proud,—we must all be proud,—of all these advantages. But when I look through and under them to the foundation of the system, I behold something that awakens a still more lively sentiment of satisfaction and national pride ; I mean the noble moderation, with which the people, released from almost every positive restraint, submit themselves spontaneously to the higher law of their own sense of duty ;—I mean the care for education,—the mutual regard for the rights of others,—the respect for the outward observances of Religion,—the deeply felt faith in its solemn truths,—the high and healthy tone of philosophy and literature in all their departments, which make up together the moral and religious basis of our political institutions. When I contem-

plate such a state of society, I acknowledge that our noble fathers, to whom, under Providence, we are indebted for it, were equal to the task they undertook,—that loftiest of all human enterprises, the foundation of an Empire. When I recollect that we, their children, are charged with the duty of maintaining and perpetuating such a state of society, I am oppressed with the weight of responsibility that devolves upon us, and I feel that we can have no solid hope of success, but in a constant reliance on that Rock of Ages upon which they rested. I acquiesce most fully in the conclusion which has been drawn by the most intelligent European traveller who has yet visited our country, as the general result of all his observations and researches. “I am convinced,” says M. de JOCQUEVILLE, “that the greatest natural advantages and the best political institutions, will never secure the prosperity of a nation without good morals, while these will counteract the influence of the most unfavorable circumstances and the worst laws. The importance of good morals to national success, is a truth to which all study and all experience constantly bring us back. I find it placed in my mind, like a central point, in which all my enquiries and reflections terminate. If I have not impressed upon others the degree of influence which I attribute to the *moral habits* of the Americans, in maintaining their political institutions, I have failed in the principal object of my work.”

I have thus, gentlemen, too concisely for a satisfactory developement of so extensive a subject, though far too largely, I fear, for your patient attention,—endeavored to describe and illustrate the respective moral characteristics of the literature of the last, and of the present century. I have shewn you the practical results of the licentiousness of the former period in the excesses of the French Revolution,—of the comparative purity of the latter, in the success of our own government, and of the revolution now

in progress in England. Indulge me one moment longer while, as a practical improvement of the preceeding remarks, I invite and earnestly entreat you to lend your personal influence in keeping up the correct and elevated moral tone, which has hitherto distinguished the conduct, opinions and literature of our country. On you, and those who, like you, are going forth annually from our seats of learning, to fill the professional and political employments of society, it devolves, in a great measure, to determine the character of public opinion. Resolve firmly,—labor strenuously and perseveringly,—that it may not degenerate under your influence. Cultivate assiduously in yourselves and others, the pure, generous, religious spirit, which I have described as the characteristics of the literature of the present age. Avoid in your lives and writings the stain of licentiousness which formed the reproach of that of the last century. Avoid the less seductive, but, if possible, still more degrading idolatry of mammon, which is, perhaps, the besetting sin of this. Keep before you the examples of the fathers of our country, who left their delightful abodes in the wealthy and civilised regions of the old world, that they might worship God with freedom of conscience in the wilderness;—of the statesmen and patriots, who at a later period, endangered, without hesitation, their lives and fortunes, when they pledged their sacred honor to the cause of independence and liberty. Recollect that it depends, at this moment, on your fidelity,—on the fidelity of the present generation,—to the principles and examples of our fathers, whether the fruits of their sacrifices shall be transmitted unimpaired to future generations, or lost forever. The destinies of our country, as they now present themselves to the eye of probable conjecture, are magnificent, beyond any precedent in history,—almost beyond the scope of the wildest fancy: but it depends, as I have said, on the fidelity of each succeeding generation to its

great trust, whether these bright anticipations shall be converted into splendid and glorious realities, or vanish into nothing, like the unsubstantial pageant of a dream. We, gentlemen, as the existing generation, occupy in our time, that isthmus of the Present, which interposes its narrow bound between the immutable Past, and the still uncertain Future. We bear up for a fleeting moment on our feeble shoulders, the institutions on which depends the welfare of those who are to follow us. In that cloudy, billowy abyss of the Future, which spreads itself before us, I can almost fancy that I see the shadowy forms of the myriads, whose fortunes will be determined by our conduct, rising in countless groups, and with clasped hands, imploring us to be true to our duty. From that higher and happier sphere, where they are now reaping the reward of their earthly labors, our canonised fathers look down upon us with eyes of encouragement, of warning, of love. They direct our view to the long roll where History records, in blazing characters, the crimes and the punishments of the nations that have gone before us.

Gentlemen, you have read this roll. Within those venerable walls the treasured stores of learning have been opened to you ; the task of preparation is completed ; the hour of action has at length arrived.

Go forth then, gentlemen, cheerfully, resolutely, fearlessly, to the warfare of life ; and may the blessing of Providence guide you aright through its various perils. Temptations will assail you. Shake them off like dew-drops from the lion's mane. Dangers will beset you. Encounter them without dismay. Labor, suffer, perish, if it must be so, in the sacred cause of truth and virtue. Finally, gentlemen, when the fight waxes hottest and all other resources seem to desert you,—when the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint,—then lift your eyes aloft, and behold, emblazoned in the azure field of

the firmament, waving gloriously its snow-white folds from pole to pole, that wondrous banner, which the first christian Emperor saw, or thought he saw, in the midst of battle, beaming gloriously upon him through surrounding clouds, the banner of Religion ;—and read upon it, as he did, in letters, as bright as the flashes of the forked lightning, the assurance of success. *ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ.*
By this conquer.







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